"The Zookeeper Will Keep All The Animals Safe"

Pupil Perspectives on School Safety

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Abstract

Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare ought to be top priorities of schools in this country if learning is to take place (Chaplain, 2003). This project explores Year 1 children's perception of safety at school and the elements that influence these perceptions including the role of the teacher, peers and the learning environment. The participants of the study were from a rural primary school in the UK, aged 5-6 years who partook in a class circle time, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The key findings suggest that Year 1 children believe safety at school is important and regard the teacher as having a central responsibility in this area.

Introduction

On December 14th 2012, a disturbed individual shot dead 20 children and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in the USA. A school, an assumed safe haven for learning, "committed to building lifelong learners, capable of responding to the changing needs and demands of our world" (Sandy Hook Elementary School, 2008). With the demands of our 21st century world comes the threat to individuals' physical safety, a massive consideration of schools worldwide. How are we, as practitioners, going to keep our children safe in order for them to become the best learners they can be?

I realise these tragic incidents are rare, especially here in the UK, however the events that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School truly resonated with me as a teacher in training. Originally the focus of my research was the student-teacher relationship and how this affects a child's attitude towards school. However in light of the events of 14th December and the realisation that enquiring into the student-teacher relationship may have potential ethical issues, the focus of this research project is safety in schools, both in the physical and psychological sense. More specifically, the research will concentrate on Year 1 children, regarding their perceptions of school safety.

The proposed research question of this project is, do Year 1 children feel safe at school and furthermore, what factors influence their perceptions of school safety?

Literature Review

The Department for Education (DfE, 2013) states that "all schools should protect children and promote their welfare by providing a safe environment for children to learn in" among many other important key points. School's mission statements tend to include 'safe' or 'secure'. An example of one of these aims is to "allow all to learn in a happy, caring, stimulating and *secure* environment" (School X). Whilst it is essential that school policies include information concerning safety and security, Chaplain (2003) argues that a child's 'perceived safety' is the crucial factor.

What does a safe environment constitute? This literature review will explore the pedagogical research arguing from the beginning that a child's physical safety is a basic human need (Maslow, 1954) and a pre-requisite for effective learning to take place (Kaufman, 2008). Thus this review acknowledges that safety involves both physical and psychological elements.

Safety as a Basic Human Need

To begin, it is essential to explore the issue of safety as a fundamental human need, as this defines its utmost importance in schools. Chaplain (2003) claims that Maslow's model can be used to understand the "relationship between perceived safety and learning" (p.142), the focus of this research project. Abraham Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs model asserts that certain human needs must be fulfilled and satisfied in order for a person to reach their potential, or what Maslow calls, self-actualisation. The bottom tier of the hierarchy includes physiological needs such as food and sleep. The next tier is of great importance to this research as it concerns safety and security. The fact that safety and security belong on the second tier emphasises their central significance in an individual's life and in regards to this project, a child's learning. If safety and security are not fulfilled at school, there is less chance a child will feel like they belong, (3rd tier need) let alone succeed. As with all models, Maslow's hierarchy of needs has exceptions such as "the hungry painter who continues to work without the necessary compensation to adequately fulfil basic human needs" (Steere, 1988, p. 23). However, breakfast clubs in the UK are booming as schools have realised that the absence of food (a 1st tier physiological need) hinders learning.

Children's Perceptions of School Safety

It is not only the government and schools that believe safety is vital but children too realise that their safety is important. Researchers discovered that children "described feeling safe and secure as important to well-being because this enabled them to engage fully with life" (Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2009, p. 65). If children believe that being safe is necessary to enjoy life to the full, it must be the aim of practitioners to ensure that children feel safe at school, assuring they are able to engage fully with learning. This is a fundamental objective for schools as a child's perceived safety will affect their grades, engagement with learning and school attendance (Bowan & Bowan, 1999; Hilarski, 2004) -- 3 essential factors for effective learning to take place.

Currently, the motivation for many schools is towards achievement levels and targets and less about the emotional well-being of their students, including their perceived safety. Researchers argue that this is detrimental to a child's development and targets will not be achieved if well-being and emotional safety is not cared for (Cohen, 2006). In 2009, Boulton et al. (2009) found that as a result of the swayed school focus, 5-10% of 9-11 year olds (n = 364) reported that they did not feel safe at

school. Therefore listening to children's opinions on a matter like school safety is necessary for schools to succeed. According to research, students feel safe at school when students want to do well; are supported by parents, adults and teachers; and protected from undesirable peer behaviour such as bullying (Shumox & Lomax, 2001).

The Classroom as a Safe Learning Environment

A safe classroom "is one where teachers can teach and students can learn in a warm, encouraging and nurturing environment" (Kitsantas, Ware & Martinez-Arias, 2004, p. 413). Recognisably, the class teachers will influence this type of safe learning environment tremendously. However in terms of a physically safe learning environment, Olds (1979) claims that "young children will not engage in genuine, exploratory and discovery behaviours unless they first feel comfortable and secure in their physical surroundings" (p. 94). This statement argues that the physical elements of the classroom are essential. Areas in the classroom should be safe for children to investigate, especially for young children, as they are more likely to fear for their safety at school than older children (Bachman, Randolph & Brown, 2010). Accordingly, classrooms should provide areas, such as book corners, that offer comfort and cosiness in the classroom. Whilst the physical aspects of the classroom are important, it is the psychological safety and reassurance that the teacher can offer that is fundamental.

The teacher has the power to make his or her classroom as physically safe as it can be but in terms of a safe psychological learning environment, it must be considered that the classroom is a 'microcosm' of the outside world (Frusciante, 2008; Kitsantas, Ware & Martinez-Arias, 2004). Social norms, prejudice, stereotypes are all carried into the classroom, over which the teacher has little control. The community in which a school belongs has considerable influence on a child and more pertinently on a child's perceived safety at school (Kitsantas, Ware & Martinez-Arias, 2004; Lorion, 1998; Stephens, 1994). However, the teacher does have the opportunity to challenge and educate the views of the outside world with his or her pupils. By doing so, teachers may tackle the issues that social norms have on certain individual's perceived school safety.

The Teacher-Protection Hypothesis

Chaplain (2003) states that a child's perceived safety is more than physical factors such as the school gates being locked or an inviting classroom but for a child it is about, "knowing what

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behaviour is expected […], believing their teacher and other responsible adults are capable of protecting them from harm […], that their teachers have their best interest at heart" (p. 143). All of these aspects are argued to be the 'ethical obligations' and 'responsibility' of educators (Barrett, 2010; Chan & Treacy, 1996).

The 'teacher-protection' hypothesis argues that "children who enjoy a good relationship with their teacher are less at risk of feeling unsafe at school" (Boulton et al. 2009, p. 257). However, the same researchers found that the relationship between student and teacher did not moderate a child's perception of safety in the playground, only in the classroom. Therefore it would seem the role of the teacher in terms of a child's perceived safety is only applicable in the context of the classroom.

The student-teacher relationship is central to the healthy development and success of children in the primary school classroom (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). For young children, the relationship between the child and teacher is much like that of a parent and child (Birch & Ladd, 1997) where the children use the teacher as a secure base from which to explore the world around them. The teacher must possess and display qualities such as sensitivity, warmth, approachability and supportiveness in order to foster a positive relationship with students (Fassinger, 1995; Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold & Kannas, 1998).With positive student-teacher relationships the teacher is more able to create a 'safe space' in the classroom that "allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views and explore their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours" (Holley & Steiner, 2005, p. 50). Thus a teacher's approach to learning has an instrumental effect on the way a child perceives safety at school. According to Akiba (2008), a child-centred approach is the teaching style associated with less fear at school. Teachers must note that whilst creating a 'safe space' in the classroom is essential for effective learning, it also creates an environment in which children feel more comfortable to disclose sensitive issues (Barrett, 2010).

Whilst the role of the teacher is imperative to a child's perception of school safety, so too is the involvement of parents in a child's learning (Hong & Eamon, 2012). For some, the teacher may offer a second chance to a secure attachment (Birch & Ladd, 1997) and thus a feeling of security. It is also important to note that a constructive teacher-student relationship does not ensure a child will feel safe at school. However, the relationship the teacher is able to offer a primary school child can moderate feelings of safety (Boulton et al., 2009). A child may have a lack of perceived safety at school for a multitude of reasons, including bullying (Cowie & Oztug, 2008).

Behaviour Management Strategies

The enforcement of school rules is also essential for a child's perceived school safety (Mijanovich & Weitzman, 2003) for an effective learning environment is "a safe, orderly environment where rules are clear and consistent" (Borger, Lo, Oh & Walberg, 1985, p. 15). The consistency, appropriateness and fairness of the rules are significant predictors of perceived safety (Schreck & Miller, 2003). If rules are set but they are not adhered to or consistent, the learning environment may be perceived as an erratic and thus unpredictable place. If children are aware of the expectations and what happens when expectations are not met they are more likely to feel safe and secure (Chaplain, 2003). This is because they know that a system is in place for anything that might harm them physically or psychologically. Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2002) agree, as they claim "feeling safe is related to the health of an institution's social control system and to a well conceptualised, fairly implemented set of prosocial rules" (p. 307). However these rules work moreefficiently when they are not merely enforced but discussed at the beginning of the year with the pupils for their understanding and ownership (Chaplain, 2003).

Concluding Remarks

Whilst there are many factors that influence a child's perceived safety at school, it is imperative to remember that "children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically secure" (Rushton & Larkin, 2001, p.32). Physical school safety is a matter of great concern and it can never be one hundred per cent guaranteed by anyone, regardless of procedures in place. However, teachers have a chief role in constructing classrooms that define psychologically safe learning environments where children can express themselves and their ideas confidently.

Methodology

Sample

The participants in this study were from a small, rural primary school in the United Kingdom. The 12 students that partook in the research were from a Year 1 class with an age range of 5 to 6 years. The children that participated in the research were of a convenience sample. More specifically,

children took part if they had finished their work early or were completing an activity independently. The interview pairs were randomly selected. It is worth stating that the children felt reasonably comfortable with me, as I had been working in their classroom 5 weeks prior to the study.

Procedure

There were 3 parts to the research project that included a class circle time, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. This mixed methods approach was chosen, as triangulation is a valuable approach to research, especially for counterbalancing the strengths and limitations of certain methods (Perlesz & Lindsay, 2003). Combining multiple research methods to explore one issue also gives the study more strength, meaning and weight (Gorard & Taylor, 2011).

Circle Time

A class circle time was used as the first part of my research as the class' personal, social, health and emotional (PSHE) topic for the term was called 'Keeping Safe'. With the teacher's permission and the children's consent I recorded the circle time. I followed all the rules of the school's usual circle time procedure including a warm up game, an object used to pass around the circle, one person speaking at a time and a game to finish. All of these protocols ensured the children felt comfortable sharing their ideas and beliefs. They were always given the option to pass if they didn't want to share. I made sure this was explicit from the beginning. The prompt for the circle was 'I feel safe when…' This prompt was an approach to understand what safe means to 5 and 6 year olds and offered guidance and direction for the questioning of my subsequent research methods. In this way, circle time acted in the same manner as a focus group as the purpose of a focus group is to explore individual's ideas, to gain an insight into participant's thoughts (Babbie, 2008). Whilst focus groups offer lots of information quickly, they are susceptible to groupthink whereby participants often conform to the ideas of other people in the group (Babbie, 2008).

Questionnaire/Structured Interview

The School Attitude/Behaviour Questionnaire (SABQ) (Appendix A) (Geddes, Murrell & Bauguss, 2010) measures a child's general attitude towards school. I chose this questionnaire as this measure may be influenced by a child's perception of school safety (Bowan & Bowan, 1999; Hilarski,

2004). The questionnaire was also a means by which the young participants could become more comfortable with answering questions. The SABQ consists of 26 items including 'do you like school?', 'do you have fun at school?' and 'are you scared of going to school?' A further item was added to the questionnaire that asked 'do you feel safe at school?' This question allowed for conversations about safety that guided the construction of interview questions. Some of the questions from the SABQ needed to be reworded for understanding, such as the word 'recess' being replaced with 'break time'. Questionnaires are invaluable research methods as large amounts of data can be obtained and measured more definitely (Babbie, 2008). However, structured, closed questionnaires have narrow answers with less opportunity for opinion (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Questionnaires also demand a certain level of reading ability and language comprehension. In regards to this sample, the questionnaire was a method to understand their attitudes towards school but the literacy levels of the participants were limited. Therefore, in order for all the pupils to access the questionnaire, it was read out to the participants and they were asked to circle either Yes or No.

Interview

The semi-structured interview (see Appendix B) was implemented to give perspective to yes and no answers from the preceding questionnaires and to follow up ideas from circle time. Interviews are considered to be one of the most valuable research methods in educational studies, especially when working with young children, where the primary aim is to understand their perspective (Scott, 2000). However, interviews are subject to bias as the analysis will be highly subjective, especially without a second opinion (Bell, 2010). Interviews were conducted in randomly paired groups. I chose to conduct the interviews this way so that the children felt more comfortable answering questions and they could develop and enrich each other's ideas.

The interview contained 11 items including both open and closed questions. An example of a question derived from the results from the questionnaire was 'Other people in your class said that teachers and friends make them feel the most safe at school, which one makes you feel the most safe at school?' Interviews lasted about 10 minutes and were audiotaped with the permission of the participant.

Data Analysis

In accordance with using a mixed methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was conducted. The yes and no responses to questionnaires were scored to assess a child's overall attitude towards school in a quantitative manner. However, the only items that were analysed were those relevant to the direct research question, linked to the issue of safety. These items were, 'do you like school?', 'would you rather be at home than school?', 'do you like being at school?', 'do you pretend to be sick to stay home from school?' 'do you like your classroom?', 'does school make you happy?', 'are you scared of going to school?', 'do you fight with your parents about going to school?', 'do you have fun at school?' and 'do you feel safe at school?'.

Both circle time and the interviews were first analysed qualitatively, using thematic analysis. Common themes that arose were associated with the current literature. The themes were then analysed quantitatively by recording how many times certain ideas were reported during the interview or circle time and to analyse the proportions of different answers. Connections could then be made to the results of the questionnaire.

Ethics

Before conducting educational research it is compulsory to consider ethical issues (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Many protocols were carried out prior to the data collection, ensuring that this research project was ethically sound.

Gaining Permission

Firstly, I completed an ethics checklist (Appendix C) that was signed by my personal tutor. I was also aware that permission had to be sought from the school and potentially the parents or guardians of the children in the class. However after meeting with the head teacher I was told that the school's policy on permission for research was applicable to this project. Therefore permission from parents for this specific project was not required. The head teacher signed a form specifying that permission be granted for this project to take place (Appendix D).

It was not only necessary to gain permission from the head teacher but from the participants themselves. As active partakers, it was imperative to ask them if they would like to be part of my

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project before the study began, respecting their right to choose (Howe & Moses, 1999). I always obtained consent from the teacher before I asked children to come with me for the interview or questionnaire and she was always aware of our location in the school.

Ensuring Confidentiality and Anonymity

Anonymity and confidentiality are also essential in research (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). To ensure anonymity I asked the children to think of a pseudonym. A benefit of them choosing a new name was that they were excited about the interview set up. Before the research began, children were assured of their right to confidentiality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and told that their answers were safe with me. After the interview, children were acknowledged for their participation in the project and were reassured of confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were deleted as soon as they had been transcribed.

Making Participants Feel Comfortable

As the participants of this study were young (either 5 or 6 years old) and had only known me for a short period of time, I made the decision to conduct the interview in paired groups. This was decided so that the children felt comfortable with the set up and less intimidated by the situation of an interview. The interviews were conducted in the ICT suite, classroom or the foyer of the school as these places ensured we were visible. This was an important consideration as I was alone with the children when conducting the interviews. The questionnaires were completed in the book corner of the classroom, a comfortable area, again where we could be seen.

Results

The findings will be presented in terms of the method used beginning with the circle time discussion and ending with the semi-structured interviews.

Circle Time

The circle time discussion (see Appendix E) was valuable for informing me what 5 and 6-year-olds cognise about the word 'safe'. It was also a practical starting point for the interviews that were to follow. Being able to include the whole class in the session allowed for a range of opinions and

perspectives about what it means to be safe. In terms of data analysis, common themes became evident. These were parents, friends, siblings, teachers, physical safety elements (eg. gates) and the last category was labelled as 'other'. 3 children opted to pass which is a fundamental rule to circle time and thus for this particular activity. The graph below demonstrates the findings.
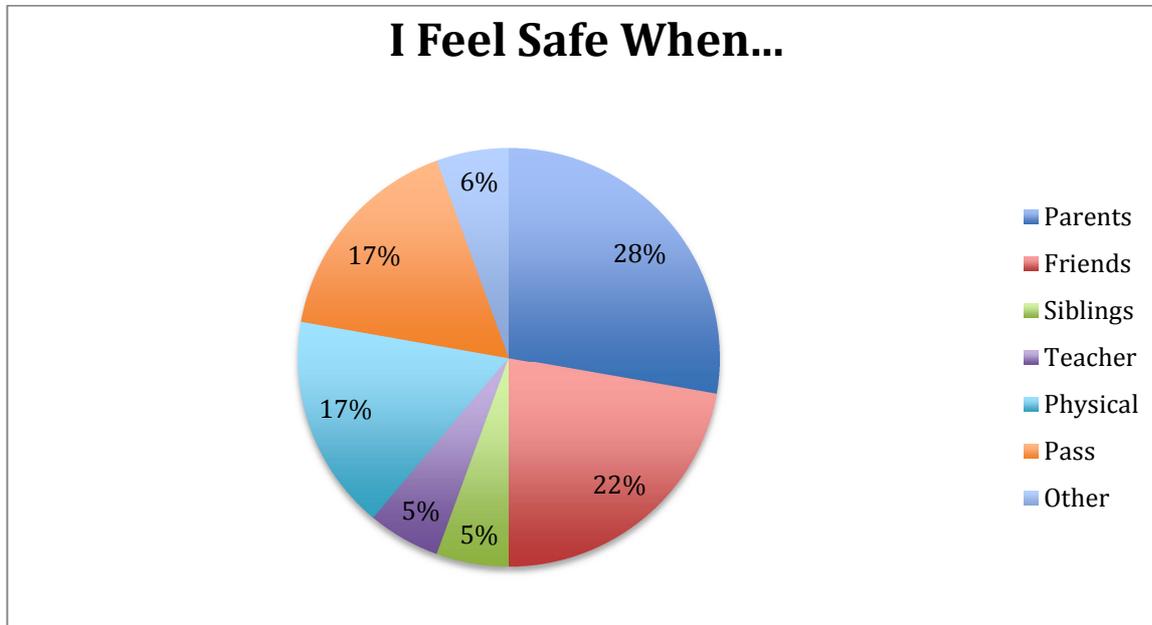

Figure 1 – Circle Time Responses to the Prompt 'I Feel Safe When…"

From the graph, 28% of children discussed their parents when finishing the prompt 'I feel safe when…' One child said, "I feel safe […] holding my mum's hand." The next most noticeable theme was friends. 17% of the participants stated that physical objects made them feel safe including objects such as helmets and gates. One participant said "I feel safe at home cos the gates are shut." Answers that included wearing a helmet may have been influenced by the example set by the teacher, which was "I feel safe when I wear my helmet while I'm cycling." However, circle time requires that the teacher speak as an equal member of the circle. It also tends to help children understand the prompt if the prompt is first modelled to them. The 'other' category was used for the comment made by a child who claimed he feels safe "everywhere".

Questionnaire

Responses from the child SABQ (Geddes, Murrell & Baguss, 2010) were recorded for each participant using Yes and No answers. However, the only items that were analysed were those concerned with the issue of school safety such as "Are you scared of going to school?" The relevant

school safety questions are exhibited in the graph below. It is also important to note that 2 participants were not present at the time of the questionnaire thus responses were taken from 10 children only. The following graph explores children's responses to the child SABQ.
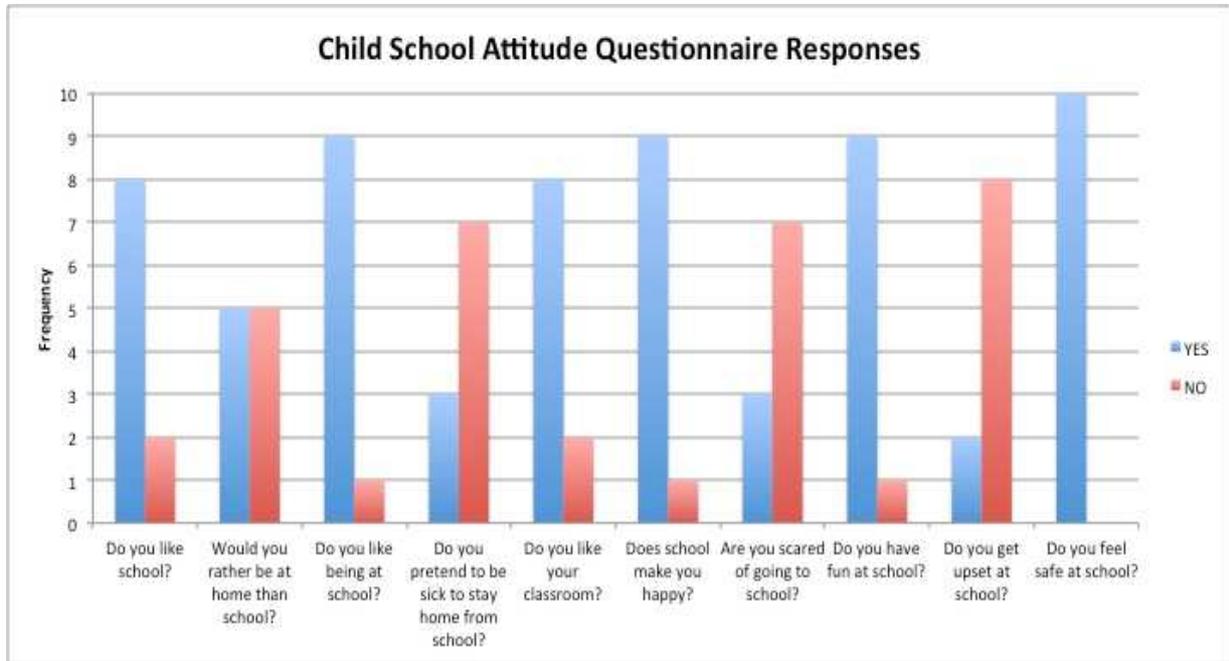
Figure 2 – SABQ Responses to School Safety Questions

The graph demonstrates that overall, children generally had a positive attitude towards school. 90% of children reported feeling happy at school and reported having fun at school. Whilst this does not directly imply their feelings of school safety, it demonstrates that their basic need for safety is being fulfilled. This can be inferred from the data, as security and safety is a pre-requisite for individuals to have fun and feel happy at school (Rushton & Larkin, 2001).

In regards to the direct issue of school safety, 100% of children reported feeling safe at school. This corresponds with the children's answers in the follow up interviews indicating consistency in answers and feelings. Even though 100% of children claimed they felt safe when at school, 3 out of 10 children reported that they were scared of going to school, perhaps this is reflective of their transport to school.

When asked if they would rather be at home than school, 50% of students chose home. However in retrospection, this question may not be directly linked to the issue of perception of school safety, as children may prefer to stay at home for a myriad of reasons. In addition, 100% of children reported

feeling safe at school thus the opting towards staying at home is less likely to be a consequence of not feeling safe at school but rather for an alternative motivation.

80% of the children said they liked their classroom, a finding that is relevant to the idea that the classroom is a safe haven or a secure base (Geddes, 2006). This result may infer that children feel safe in the classroom but this can not be assumed as this may be reflective factors such as classroom displays. However if the pupils did not feel safe in the classroom they would have been more likely to answer no.

Interview

In addition to the responses from the circle time prompt and the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was conducted. Samples of 3 transcribed interview transcripts are available in Appendix F. The interview served as a follow up and a further insight into a child's perspective and opinion of safety at school.

Children's Perception of General Safety

To begin the interviews, it was important to understand individual children's general understanding of the word 'safe' and their thoughts about its meaning. Even though this topic was explored during circle time, it was a starting point into the topic of school safety. Through thematically analysing the data, it was found that a common theme in children's answers to the question 'what does the word "safe" mean?' concerned road safety. 50% of participants mentioned roads in response to this question. Figero claimed the word safe meant, "you don't get to cross the road without an adult." Ben said, "you don't walk on the road when it's red" whilst Lovegirl stated, "If it's a green man you can cross the road." This commonality may be due to the fact that road safety is an essential issue learnt in the primary school with the Department for Transport's numerous resources to accompany teaching.

Other children had more abstract answers for their understanding of safe, such as Giraffe. Giraffe states that the word safe for him "means someone getting you and someone is going to keep you safe. Like a person, no like a zookeeper. Crocodile in a zoo and it wants to eat you up. The zookeeper will keep all the animals safe." This response was most likely influenced by the

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children's current topic on African animals. Not only evident in the responses but in the pseudonym choice too.

Children's Perception of School Safety

When asked if they felt safe at school, 11 participants out of the total 12 reported that yes they did feel safe. The one participant that did not report feeling safe gave no answer. This may have been due to the paired grouping interview situation rather than him feeling unsafe at school, as he had previously answered yes in the questionnaire. The same result was found when asking the children if they thought it was important to feel safe. Again, the participant that did not say yes gave no answer. When asked why it was important to feel safe at school, 4-Arms made a connection between feeling safe and learning, a connection many researchers have established to be essential (Chaplain, 2003). He said it is important to feel safe at school "because you need to learn".

Role of the Teacher

When asked if their teachers or friends made them feel the most safe at school, 58% of children reported that their teachers make them feel the most safe whilst the remaining 42% reported that their friends make them feel the most safe. Overall teachers were mentioned 28 times and friends 21 times throughout the 6 interviews. If children first mentioned teachers as the group of individuals who make them feel the most safe, they were most likely to report friends to the question that asked 'are there any other people that make you feel safe at school?' 2 of the 12 participants individually mentioned the head teacher as another individual who makes them feel safe at school. Another 2 participants reported that the presence of other students, not necessarily their friends, made them feel safe.

Participants were not only asked which group of individuals made them feel the most safe (teachers or friends) but reasons why. In terms of explanations for teachers being the group of individuals for keeping the children safe, there was a range of answers. When asked why teachers made him feel the safest, Ultimate said, "because they can move […] names". This quote refers to their behaviour management system in place in the classroom whereby children move their name from a green square to a warning square if they display undesirable or inappropriate behaviour. Elephant also mentioned that teachers were the group that made her feel safe over friends because they have the ability to tell you off and move your name. These opinions reflect the current literature that states

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rules are essential to a child's perceived school safety (Mijanovich & Weitzman, 2003). Other reasons for choosing teachers rather than friends included "because they are much bigger" (4-Arms).

The Classroom as a Secure Base

The majority (59%) of participants claimed the classroom was the space in school in which they felt the most safe. Other reported safe areas in school were the hall, ICT suite, toilets, outside and the cupboards. Fireman claims "if you go in the toilet, you'll be safe because nobody can get you". Fireman goes on to explain why he believes the toilets are the safest space in school, "not the lights. Not inside the toilet. I like the door like when it keeps me safe." The same participant reported that feeling safe at school was about hiding somewhere so you can't be found.

Sarah commented that she felt the most safe "in the class with the teacher, next to the computer, on the orange table". This answer reflects 2 critical elements. First, 'next to the computer' is where the teacher often sat or where the teacher taught from, thus highlighting Sarah's need for proximity to the teacher. Secondly, the orange table was frequently the table where the Special Educational Needs group of children were sat. This point is valuable to the discussion as this table often had a Teaching Assistant assigned to it. Therefore, it is not only the role of the teacher that Sarah sees as important to her safety in class but the TA's presence in the classroom as well.

Whilst adults may be of great importance to the safety of the classroom, Sparkles said she felt the most safe in the book corner area of the classroom, as "it's nice and soft". Sparkles perceived safety in a space at school according to its physical attributes rather than the presence of adults. This view was much like that of Sonic who claimed he felt the most safe outside. He asserted this was because there is "a bit more room outside" and "you could get hit if you're playing a game" inside.

The Learning Environment/Climate

A safe learning environment is central to learning (Chaplain, 2003) and is crucial for engagement (Bowan & Bowan, 1999; Hilarski, 2004). The items in the interview that explored a child's feeling of safety in their learning environment, included questions that investigated whether or not children felt safe to answer questions in a lesson and if they felt safe making mistakes. 100% of participants reported that they felt safe to answer questions in a lesson. This positive result indicates that the

teacher has developed and established a 'safe space' and learning environment in the classroom where all feel safe to answer questions and to share ideas (Holley & Steiner, 2005), essential ingredients for effective learning to take place.

While participants felt safe to answer questions in class, they reported to feel less safe when they made a mistake. 50% of participants reported that they felt safe when they answered a question incorrectly. Sparkles claims its acceptable to make mistakes as "it's not the end of the world", perhaps a phrase the teacher or parents use to encourage Sparkles to participate without fear. Giraffe claims that "when you get it wrong you just have to cross it out and start all over again." Giraffe was also one of the participants with the most negative attitude towards school, according to the child SABQ. The remaining participants did not respond to the question which may be an effect of the paired interviews.

Reflection on Research Methodology

As with all research, this study comes with many limitations. However, in terms of strengths, the mixed methods style was an invaluable approach as it offered richer and more detailed data than if a single method approach had been implemented. The use of different research methods also meant that the results of one method could offer guidance for the subsequent method. For example, circle time and the questionnaire offered direction for the questioning of the interview.

Circle Time

Class circle time acted much like a focus group in terms of exploration of children's ideas rather than definite answers (Babbie, 2008). However, as this was a large focus group setting with 18 participants, children were susceptible to groupthink, conforming to their peer's ideas or the thoughts of the teacher. If I were to conduct this study again, I would use the procedure of a circle time, as it ensures children respect other's opinions, but with fewer participants to eliminate group conformity and feelings of intimidation.

Questionnaire

The child SABQ was a valuable tool to investigate a child's general attitude towards school but many of the questions were irrelevant to the topic in hand. Whilst only the items that were

applicable to perceived school safety were analysed, there was minor worth in asking the children to respond to the full 27 items, especially young children. Another weakness of giving a questionnaire to 5 and 6 year olds is that it was not self-completed. The majority of children were limited in their literacy skills and thus the questionnaire was read out loud to the participants. The children may have been influenced by my presence, answering according to how they thought they should rather than honestly.

Semi-Structured Interview

Out of all the research methods used, the semi-structured interview offered the most insight into a child's perception of school safety, as the children were given more freedom in their answers. The interviews were conducted in randomly paired groups that were aimed to make the children feel more at ease rather than being alone with the researcher. However, participants were frequently influenced by the other individual they had been paired with. Oftentimes, one child was more dominant than the other thus their opinions were made clearer than the other. Occasionally, a member of the pair would not feel the need to respond to the question as the other child could answer for them. This resulted in responses such as "I think the same". However, some pairs positively added to each other's comments, strengthening certain ideas and making them clearer for data analysis. Another limitation of the semi-structured interview was the types of question asked. Many questions were closed in nature and may have been better used in the questionnaire.

Implications for Future Development

Listening to a child's voice and concerns in educational matters is necessary if a school wants to succeed (Alexander, 2010). Spending time with a child individually and valuing their opinions can help foster relationships grounded in mutual respect. I realise this can be time-consuming as very often a teacher may have 30 children or more in his or her class. However, getting to know a class of pupils and taking an interest in what they have to say is important, especially when it comes to their perceived school safety.

For me as a trainee teacher, this research project has re-emphasised the considerable responsibility a teacher has in making children feel safe at school. As this study has shown, primary school children predominantly look to their teachers to keep them safe when at school. Nonetheless, I am also

learning that the role of the teacher is limited. The influences on perceived safety are vast and in many ways, out of the teacher's power and control. These factors include the community to which the school belongs and parental support. The current research validates the notion that the home-school partnership is of prime importance not only in terms of learning but also in terms of a child's perceived school safety. For the teacher, safety may be an 'ethical obligation' but outside of school, a teacher has restricted power.

The findings have not only demonstrated the importance of listening to a child's concerns and beliefs but also the necessity of creating and maintaining a safe learning environment where children feel free to participate without fearing failure. Just as Sparkles said, "it's not the end of the world" when you get an answer wrong, I want the children in my classroom to feel the same way. I will want to consider those who do not feel comfortable and accordingly work with them in developing their confidence while accepting that some children are more introverted than others. If the children in my class understand that everyone has a right to an opinion that will be valued and mistakes are to be learned from and not laughed at, I feel like success in a key area of perceived school safety would have been achieved.

This study has also revealed that school rules are of importance to a child's perception of school safety. Again, teachers are involved, as these are the individuals that ensure rules and routines are in place consistently and fairly. For a child, knowing that there are consequences for those that may harm them physically or psychologically is important. It is imperative for a child to feel they are in a system that cares for their well-being and safety, especially if an incident was to happen (Chaplain, 2003). The head teacher also has a role to play in this area as discovered in the study. Whilst children primarily chose the teacher as an individual that they felt kept them the most safe, the head teacher was also reported. Although the power of the teacher is important to a child's perceived safety, the notion that there is an even higher authoritative figure at school is key.

Just as Giraffe said in the interview, "the zookeeper will keep all the animals safe", I as a teacher hope to keep my pupils as safe as I possibly can, both physically and psychologically. I want to believe that I would have protected my students in the same courageous manner the teachers did at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14th 2012, when school safety was violated and destroyed.

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Appendix A
Child School Attitude Questionnaire (Geddes, Murrell & Bauguss, 2010)

Child School Attitude Questionnaire
Circle Yes or No

1. Do you like school?	Y	N
2. Do you like homework?	Y	N
3. Would you rather be at home than school?	Y	N
4. Do you think that you are good at schoolwork?	Y	N
5. Do you like your teacher?	Y	N
6. Do you like being at school?	Y	N
7. Do you have friends at school?	Y	N
8. Do you think school is boring?	Y	N
9. Do you pretend to be sick to stay home from school?	Y	N
10. Do you like your classroom?	Y	N
11. Does school make you happy?	Y	N
12. Do you like to learn new things at school?	Y	N
13. Do you follow the rules at school?	Y	N
14. Do you get in trouble at school?	Y	N
15. Do you get along with other kids in your class?	Y	N
16. Are you scared of going to school?	Y	N
17. Is it hard to talk to other kids at school?	Y	N
18. Do you fight with your parents about going to school?	Y	N
19. Do you have fun at school?	Y	N
20. Do you get upset at school?	Y	N
21. Do you do well in your class?	Y	N
22. Do you like break time?	Y	N

23. Are other kids mean to you at school?   Y N

24. Do you like the head teacher?   Y N

25. Do you ever say no when your parents ask you to get ready for school?   Y N

26. Do you want to do well in school?   Y N

27. Do you feel safe at school?   Y N

Appendix B
Interview Schedule

Ease them into the interview. Let them know about the Dictaphone recording.
Ask them to pick their own names. Tell participants that their answers and identities will
be kept confidential. Ask them for permission.

- What does the word 'safe' mean?
- Do you feel safe at school?
- What does it mean to be safe at school?
- Is it important to feel safe at school?
- Can you do good learning if you don't feel safe?
- Other people in your class said that teachers and friends make them feel the most safe at school, which one makes you feel the most safe at school?
- Are there other people that make you feel safe at school?
- Why do they make you feel safe?
- Do you feel safe to answer questions?
- Do you feel safe when you get an answer wrong?
- Where do you feel the most safe at school?
- Thank you for helping me with my project!

Make sure you thank the children for their participations and remind them that their
answers and identities are confidential.

Appendix C
Ethics Checklist

University of Cambridge - Faculty of Education
Early Years and Primary PGCE
Ethics checklist for research during PGCE placements

This checklist is intended for use ONLY by Faculty of Education students undertaking initial teacher education ('trainees') for classroom-based research carried during their formal professional placements as temporary members of school staff. The context of this research is that it will be undertaken with pupils in classes for which a qualified teacher has legal responsibility who acts as 'gatekeeper' and where the trainee's intended enquiry has been discussed with and approved by the responsible teacher(s) for the class(es) concerned.

Trainee name: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

School/setting: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Questions to be answered by the trainee: please clearly ring the appropriate response.

1) Do you understand why educational enquiry must be scrutinized from an ethical standpoint before any research commences?	(yes)/no
2) Have you read and do you understand the current guideline on educational research ethics issued by the British Educational Research Association? (available at http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/guidelines/ethica1.pdf)	(yes)/no
3) Can you confirm that to the best of your *belief* the research you plan to carry out will NOT be to the educational detriment to any pupils involved, and that there is no reason to expect it to cause any harm to any participant – including damaging any pupil's confidence, motivation, interest or self belief in school?	(yes)/no
4) Can you confirm that you will have sought any necessary permissions - for example to record lessons, or to work with pupils outside of timetabled lessons- in line with the school's policies and procedures? This might include seeking permission from parents, with guidance from school staff.	(yes)/no
5) Can you confirm that you have discussed your research plan with your mentor and other staff responsible for any specific class(es), and that they have approved your plan?	(yes)/no
6) Can you confirm that any substantial change to your research design subsequent to completing this form, will be discussed for approval with your mentor (and other school staff if necessary) and shared by email with your partnership tutor?	(yes)/no

**Trainee signature and date:** ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Partnership Tutor name: F. RYAN

☑ I have checked that the trainee has responded 'yes' to all questions above.
☐ I have discussed issues arising from the trainee not responding 'yes' to one or more of the questions above, and am convinced that this project is ethical (as explained in notes overleaf)

Partnership Tutor signature and date:

Note that you should append a copy of the final version of this to your work, submitting it with your research proposal form and permission letters in a separate plastic wallet attached to the assignment.

Appendix D
Permission Letter

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Education
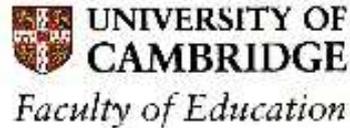
Dear Headteacher,

I am carrying out a small-scale research project as part of my Post-Graduate Certificate of Education course. The data from this research will be used in writing an essay focusing on children's ideas about factors that have an impact on their learning. The subject that I'm investigating is the student-teacher relationship and how this affects a child's attitude towards school.

In order for me to collect information about this topic it will be necessary to interview children and make audio recordings of the interview ready for analysis. The interview recordings that I make will only be used for analysis by myself. All of the recorded material will be destroyed at the end of the 2012-13 academic year. All references to the school and to the children involved in the research will be anonymised in the essay that I will write using the data.

In order for me to be able to carry out this work I need to ask you to confirm, by signing the reply at the bottom of this letter, that the school's existing permissions are sufficient for me to carry out this work.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮   9/ ı /2013

To ▮▮▮▮▮

I can confirm that the existing school permissions are adequate for you to carry out your research work with a group of children from the school.

Signed: _____

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Head of Faculty: Mike Younger MA   Acting Secretary of the Faculty: Marina Ballard.
184 Hills Road, Cambridge. CB2 8PQ Telephone: 01223 767600 http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/

Appendix E
Circle Time Transcript

I feel safe when…

TEACHER - I feel safe when I wear my helmet while I'm cycling
1 - I feel safe when I wear my helmet skiing
2 - I feel safe when with Sam and Ben
3 - I feel safe with my friends
4 - I feel safe at home cos the gates are shut
5 - I feel safe because I wear my helmet
6 - I feel safe cosurm I cross the road holding my mum's hand
TEACHING ASSISTANT - I feel safe tucked up in bed
7 - Pass
8 - I feel safe with my dad
9 - I feel safe with my mummy
10 - I feel safe cuddling a teacher
11 - I feel safe with Thomas
12 - I feel safe with Michael and my cousin going swimming
13 - Pass
14 - I feel safe everywhere
15 - I feel safe with my 2 sisters
16 - I feel safe with my mummy and daddy
17 - Pass
18 - I feel safe with my mummy.

Appendix F
Interview Transcripts

4-Arms&Ultimate Interview

Interviewer - Hello my name is Miss H
4 arms - Hello my name is 4 arms.
Ultimate - Hello my name is ultimate
Interviewer - And how old are you?
Ultimate - 6
Interviewer - and how old are you?
4 arms – urm, 5
Interviewer - okay, so you're okay to answer some questions?
Ultimate&4 arms – Yes.
Interviewer - What does the word safe mean?
Ultimate - It means nothing can get you and you're safe somewhere and no one is getting to you. When you feel safe somewhere.
4 arms – I think the same
Interviewer - anything else?
4 arms - no
Interviewer - so the word safe means when no one can get to you. That's what the word safe means? Do you feel safe at school?
Ultimate – yeah
Interviewer - Do you feel safe at school
4 arms – yes.
Interviewer - What makes you feel safe at school?
4 arms - I don't know
Interviewer – do you want time to think? What does it mean to feel safe at school ultimate?
Ultimate – it feels good
Interviewer – what makes you feel safe at school?
Ultimate - Urm, like all the teachers are around us.
Interviewer - Is it important to feel safe at school?
Ultimate – yeah
Interviewer - Why?
4 arms - Because you need to learn
Interviewer - can you do good learning if you feel safe?
Ultimate&4 arms - yes
4 arms - Because then nothing can distract you.
Interviewer - Can you do good learning if you don't feel safe?
Ultimate&4 arms – no
Interviewer – why?

4 arms - Because then you'll just have to go
Interviewer - so if you don't feel safe you have to leave?
4 arms - Yes you have to leave.
Interviewer - So I asked other people in the peacock class what makes them feel safe at school. And they said teachers and friends. Which one makes you feel the most safe?
4 arms - Both
Interviewer - Both of them but if you had to pick one?
4 arms - Teachers
Interviewer - Teachers why?
4 arms - Urm I don't know why, I forgot
Interviewer - Have a think. Why do teachers make you feel more safe than friends
4 arms - Because they're much bigger
Interviewer - Ah because they're much bigger okay. What about you?
Ultimate - I feel the same. I think teachers.
Interviewer - Teachers. Why?
Ultimate - Because they can move their names.
Interviewer - On the behaviour thing at the front?
Ultimate - Yeah
4 arms - Near the whiteboard. Underneath

Interviewer - Oh I know where you mean. Are there any other people at school that make you feel safe?
4 arms - Urm yes. The students
Ultimate – Mr. X
Interviewer – ah right. The students and Mr. X. Why does he make you feel safe?
Ultimate – because I don't know
Interviewer - Does he make you feel safe 4 arms?
4 arms – urrr yeah
Interviewer - do you feel safe to answer questions in a lesson?
Ultimate& 4 arms – Yes yes
Interviewer – do you feel safe when you get an answer wrong?
Ultimate – yes
4 arms – I don't mind
Ultimate – yeah I don't mind as well
Interviewer - so you still feel safe even if you get it wrong?
Ultimate& 4 arms – yeah
Interviewer – ah that's great. And where do you feel the most safe at school?
Ultimate - I feel safe in the classroom
Interviewer - In the classroom. Where in the classroom?
Ultimate - Everywhere in the classroom.
Interviewer - What about you?
4 arms - The same
Interviewer - Where in the classroom?
4 arms – urm everywhere
Interviewer – what about outside?
4 arms - Urm everywhere

Interviewer - Everywhere?

4 arms - Yes

Interviewer - Do you feel more safe inside or outside

4-arms - Both

Ultimate - I think both.

Interviewer - Okay thank you so much for your help!

Giraffe&Elephant Interview

Interviewer - Hello my name is Miss H

Giraffe - Hello my name is Giraffe and I am 5 and a half

Elephant - Hello I'm an elephant and I'm 5.

Interviewer - Thank you, so I'm going to ask you some questions about what it means to feel safe and about school. Is that alright?

Giraffe and Elephant – Yeah

Interviewer – ok, so what does the word safe mean giraffe?

Giraffe - Urm pardon?

Interviewer - What does the word safe mean?

Giraffe - Like means you're someone's getting you and someone is going to keep you safe.

Interviewer - Like what?

Giraffe - Like a person, no like a zookeeper. Crocodile in a zoo and it wants to eat you up. The zookeeper will keep all the animals safe.

Interviewer - What about you elephant? What does it mean to feel safe?

Elephant – stay in the gate

Interviewer – stay in the gate. Okay.

Giraffe - And if a crocodile is on the other side of the gate and you call it and it hears you and where sharks live, it comes up and it wants to eat you and you run out the gate and shut and keep in the animal gates.

Interviewer - Ah do you feel safe at school?

Giraffe&Elephant – YES

Interviewer - Do you? What does it mean to feel safe at school?

Elephant - Urm if gates open we will ask the teacher to shut the gate.

Interviewer - If the gates open, you want the teacher to shut the gate. Because that makes you feel more safe? What does it mean to feel safe at school giraffe?

Giraffe – if a bad person, if a knight is coming and it wants to chop you up and the gate is open, urm, ask the teacher, whoever you've got to shut the gates quickly.

Interviewer - quickly. And that's what it means to feel safe at school?

Giraffe – yeah

Interviewer – is it important to feel safe at school?

Giraffe&Elephant – Yeah

Interviewer - Can you do good learning if you feel safe?

Giraffe&Elephant – yeah

Interviewer - Why?

Giraffe&Elepaht - urmm

Interviewer - If you're feeling safe, you can do good work but why?

Elephant – I know, say in a classroom if you want to go to the toilet or go to water fountain, ask the teacher.
Interviewer - Ask the teacher. Does that make you feel safe?
Elephant - Yeah
Interviewer - Can you do good learning if you don't feel safe?
Giraffe&Elephant – No
Interviewer – why?
Giraffe - Because if the gates open and the doors are not locked then urm and a crocodile is coming in the school you might get eaten.
Interviewer - You might get eaten and then you cant do good learning yeah?
Giraffe - Urm, you'll just stay in the crocodile's tummy… forever
Elephant - Or we should chop his belly out.
Interviewer - So I asked other people in the peacock class what makes them feel safe. And they said teachers and friends. I want to know which one you think is more important. Which one makes you feel the most safe?
Giraffe - Gate shut and doors locked
Interviewer – gates shut, doors locked.
Elephant - Don't run out when the teachers say you cant go.
Interviewer - Ok, so would you say teachers or friends make you feel the most safe?
Giraffe&Elephant – teachers
Interviewer – teachers, why?

Elephant - Because if you run out, you'll get told off and you'll move your name.
Interviewer - Are there any other people that make you feel safe at school?
Giraffe - children.
Interviewer - Children make you feel safe?
Giraffe - If another child is being naughty
Interviewer - That makes you feel safe? Why?
Giraffe – cos they might push me over or spit at me
Interviewer - Oh right, so the teacher will make sure that doesn't happen.
Giraffe - Yeah and if it does happen, someone will tell off them and then the teacher will come to them and say why did you spit at Giraffe? And whoever
Interviewer - So they'll look after you?
Giraffe - And they will tell Mr. X if you've been extremely naughty.
Interviewer - Mr. X, does he make you feel safe?
Giraffe - Yes and he makes other people get cross with him. And then he gets more cross and then they get more cross. Then Mr. X gets more cross and then they get more cross. Then Mr. X gets more cross and then they get more cross.
Interviewer - Oh my goodness, that doesn't sound good. Do you feel safe to answer questions in a lesson?
Giraffe&Elephant – Yes
Interviewer - Do you feel safe to put up your hand?
Giraffe&Elepahnt – Yeah
Giraffe - Miss H, can I just ask you something? Can I play a game on the computer?
Interviewer - No, we are going to finish my questions and then you are going back to P.E.
Interviewer - Do you feel safe when you get an answer wrong?
Elephant – yeah

Giraffe – no

Interviewer – why?

Giraffe - Because when you get it wrong you just have to cross it out and start all over again.

Interviewer - So you don't like getting it wrong? You don't feel safe?

Giraffe – no

Interviewer - Where do you feel the most safe at school?

Elephant – in the classroom

Interviewer - Where in the classroom?

Elephant - On the floor or on the table

Giraffe - Or when someone is keeping you safe.

Interviewer - Where do you feel the most safe giraffe?

Giraffe - At home

Interviewer – at home. But at school where do you feel the most safe?

Giraffe - In the classroom

Interviewer – classroom. Where in the classroom for you?

Giraffe - Same as Elephant.On the carpet?

Interviewer – Ah okay. Thanks so much for your help!

Giraffe – I really want to play on the computer.

<center>Ben&Sparkles Interview</center>

Interviewer - Hello my name is Miss H

Ben - Hello my name is Ben

Sparkles - Hello my name is Sparkles

Interviewer - And how old are you?

Sparkles - 5

Interviewer – and how old are you?

Ben - 6

Interviewer - do you mind if I ask you some questions?

Interviewer - What does the word safe mean to you? PAUSE… What does it mean to be safe?

Sparkles - Do not cross the road. Let the teacher speak and the green light on.

Interviewer - So waiting for the teacher to cross the road is being safe

Interviewer - What about you? What does the word safe mean?

Ben - Like you don't walk on the road when it's red

Interviewer – oh okay. Do you feel safe at school?

Ben&Sparkles - yes

Interviewer - What does it mean to be safe at school?

Sparkles - You have teachers to help with you if you've bumped your head

Interviewer - Yes if you've bumped your head

Sparkles – and if you fall down really hard on a rock and you banged your eye on the door

Interviewer - So being safe at school is about the teachers looking after you?

Sparkles&Ben – yeah

Interviewer - Yeah is that what you think too?

Sparkles - Making sure that you're safe.

Interviewer - Is it important to feel safe at school?

Sparkles – Yes.

Interviewer - Can you do good learning if you feel safe?

Ben – ur yeah
Interviewer - Why?
Ben – mm…Because like if you hurt your hands you cant do good learning
Interviewer - Yeah
Sparkles - And if you hurt your brain and you stop thinking you cant think like when you use some maths and you have to think how what the end plus and your brain stops working, you cant write it down.
Interviewer - Right. So can you do good learning if you don't feel safe?
Sparkles – no
Interviewer - Why?
Sparkles - Because if you banged your hand and it bleeds all over you cant write properly
Ben - Because like blood will drip on your piece of paper what you're doing.
Interviewer - Oh right. So I asked other people in the peacock class, which two things make them feel safe. And they said teachers and friends. Which one makes you feel the most safe? PAUSE… Teachers or friends which one?
Ben – same, friends
Sparkles - Friends
Interviewer – friends make you feel the most safe. Great, why?
Ben – like if I bumped my head you can like tell a teacher
Interviewer - Yes you could tell a teacher but you said that your friends were the most important to make you feel safe. Why do your friends make you feel safe?
Sparkles - Sometimes when I bang my head like now my friends cheer me up.
Interviewer - Aw your friends cheer you up and that's how they make you feel safe.
Sparkles – yeah
Interviewer - Are there other people at school that make you feel safe?
Ben – urrr…Teachers that are doing sports
Interviewer - Oh the sports teachers. Is that at an after school club that you do? Or the people at lunch time
Ben - Teacher that do sports and stuff like football
Sparkles - And if you put paint on your hand and it really itches when you put it off and you think you're allergic to it the teachers would help you to not put paint on your hand anymore
Interviewer - Ah okay, do you feel safe to answer questions in a lesson?
Sparkles&Ben – yeah
Interviewer - Do you feel safe to put up your hand?
Sparkles&Ben - Yeah
Interviewer - Do you feel safe when you safe when you get an answer wrong?
Sparkles – yeah because its not the end of the world.
Interviewer – It's not the end of the world! And where do you feel the most safe at school?
Ben – well in the classroom
Interviewer – in the classroom. Where in the classroom?
Ben - Everywhere.
Interviewer - Everywhere, that's good and you?
Sparkles - I only/normally feel safe in the book corner.
Interviewer - In the book corner, why?
Sparkles - Because its nice and soft
Interviewer - Its nice and soft. Thank you so much for your help! That's the end of the interview.